

Equitable School Practices to Support Youth Mental Health



Fostering inclusivity in our schools means recognizing, valuing, and celebrating the unique cultural, racial, and socio-economic backgrounds that each student brings to the classroom. This is a foundational principle to supporting the delivery of an anti-racist curriculum that illuminates the value and importance of racial equality and justice and highlights the richness and uniqueness of diverse histories.

Educators can encourage critical thinking and nurture empathy by challenging stereotypes and expanding the perspectives of their students. Additionally, accessibility to quality education for all students, irrespective of their race, ethnicity, or socio-economic status, is vital for the growth and success of both individual students and the larger society. It requires equipping underrepresented students with adequate resources and support.

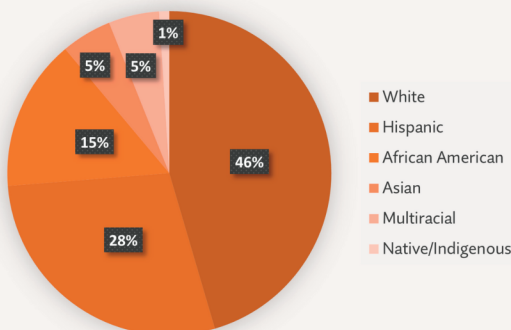
Such commitment to equitable practices extends beyond academics; it significantly impacts the mental health of students. By creating an environment where each student feels valued, understood and celebrated, we alleviate stress, anxiety, and feelings of isolation. A diverse staff and administration complement these efforts, inspiring students of color, and embedding a culture of equity and anti-racism within the school's policies and institutional behaviors. This approach not only fosters academic success but also supports healthier cognitive and emotional development, shaping a society that values fairness and inclusivity.

STUDENTS OF COLOR

55%

Between fall 2010 and fall 2021, the percentage of public school students who were Hispanic increased from 23 to 28 percent. The percentage of public school students who were White decreased from 52 to 45 percent, and the percentage of students who were Black decreased from 16 to 15 percent (U.S. Department of Education, 2021).

2021 Student Enrollment



SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, 2021

Studies have shown that students who identify as Black/African American, Native/Indigenous, Asian American/Pacific Islander, Hispanic/Latine, or multiracial experience more mental health challenges than their white peers.

Still, 61% of youth of color said they were hopeful about the future. Those who had at least one teacher of color had increased academic performance and more positive mental health.



18% attempted suicide at least once.



77% had at least one person they trusted.



42% reported experiencing at least one race-based trauma



30% of those who needed mental health care didn't receive it.



22% lost someone they loved to COVID-19.

SOURCE: Breland-Noble, A. & The AAKOMA Project. (2023). State of Mental Health for Youth of Color, [Full Report, 2022. The AAKOMA Project.](#)

PANDEMIC EFFECTS

50%

In a June 2021 survey of teens who reported feeling depressed and anxious, about 50% of Black and Hispanic teens reported mental health concerns from the pandemic, compared to 40% of white teens.



SOURCE: KFF analysis of SAMHSA, Center for Behavioral Health Statistics and Quality, National Survey on Drug Use and Health Data, 2021



Mental Health Matters: Awareness to Action Tips

The New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center develops training and technical assistance resources to address the multiple levels of cultural responsiveness needed for optimal behavioral health treatment, recovery, and care.

Use our "Awareness to Action" tips to engage and support students of color in consistent and practical ways that ensure equity and advance compassion and inclusion of all students.

Examine Policies

Establish and reinforce policies that support equity, inclusion, and representation across all aspects of your school community.

1

Use workshops & training sessions for staff to foster a culture of inclusivity and respect.

Ensure that students learn about diverse cultures, histories, and perspectives.

2

Consider Culture in Curriculum

Integrate historical context and cultural understanding into the curriculum to promote cultural humility and awareness.

Evaluate and Review

Use data, assessments, and evaluations to track progress and identify areas for improvement in promoting equity and inclusivity.

3

Develop data-informed, targeted strategies and interventions to address disparities and enhance student outcomes.

Create a culture of continuous improvement towards equity through collaborative decision-making.

4

Lead with Equity

Establish strong leadership that prioritize equity and inclusivity through regular feedback and transparent communication.

Provide Opportunity

Provide support systems for students from diverse economic backgrounds, including access to resources, financial assistance, and targeted interventions.

5

All students should have equitable opportunities to succeed academically and personally.

Promote a sense of belonging and cultural appreciation among all students and staff.

6

Use Inclusive Language

Foster a school environment that uses inclusive language and demonstrates respect for different cultures, backgrounds, as well as students' own.

7

Focus on Representation

Actively strive to maintain a diverse student body and staff that reflects the diversity of the school and community.

Implement recruitment and retention strategies prioritizing representation and inclusion.

School materials and environment should reflect your students' and community's cultural and linguistic diversity.

8

Incorporate & Include

Incorporate diversity in visual displays and curriculum materials, ensuring that students have exposure to a wide range of cultures, perspectives, and identities.

9

Practice Restorative Discipline

Implement discipline policies that prioritize restorative practices and ensure equitable distribution across all student groups.

Foster a supportive and fair learning environment that addresses behavioral issues while promoting growth, accountability, and positive relationships

Recognize the valuable role of families and community in supporting students' academic and socio-emotional development.

10

Build Relationships

Cultivate positive relationships with families, regularly communicating and providing opportunities for involvement and collaboration.



STAY CONNECTED

mhttcnetwork.org/centers/new-england-mhttc

New England Mental Health Technology Transfer Center is funded by the Substance Abuse Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) and is part of the broader Mental Health Technology Transfer Center (MHTTC) Network.

To learn more about our intentional efforts to support the multitude of mental health experiences within underserved communities, contact us.

